

Fall 2022

# Reducing Exposure to Lead in Water



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**

ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

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**DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC UTILITIES**

## How Can Lead Affect My Health?

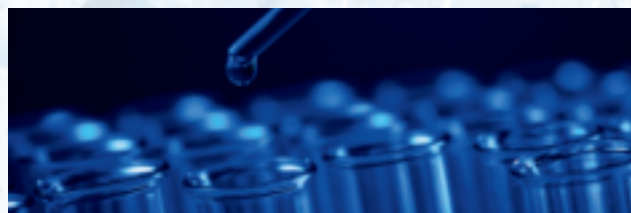
All U.S. water operators are required to comply with federal Safe Drinking Water Act regulations including the Lead and Copper Rule. Lead is a common, natural metal found throughout the environment and is used in many commercial products. Exposure to lead can be harmful. A build-up of lead in the body can cause damage to the brain or kidneys, or interfere with the production of red blood cells that carry oxygen to all parts of the body. The greatest risk is to infants, young children and pregnant women.

Your doctor can perform a blood test to determine if you or your child have been exposed to lead. Columbus Public Health's Lead Poisoning Prevention program also offers lead testing and medical follow-up services for children in Columbus and Worthington. Call 614-724-6000 or visit [columbus.gov/publichealth/programs/Lead-Poisoning-Prevention](http://columbus.gov/publichealth/programs/Lead-Poisoning-Prevention).

## Is There Lead in Columbus Water?

There is no detectable lead in:

- The water pulled from the reservoirs and wells that supply drinking water to 1.3 million people in central Ohio,
- The treated water that leaves the city's three drinking water plants, or
- The water delivered to your home through the distribution system.



## How Can Lead Get in Drinking Water?

Some water service lines, home plumbing (pipes, fittings, solder) and plumbing fixtures contain lead. As water sits in household plumbing over long periods of time, such as overnight or during work and school hours, lead can leach into the water. To prevent lead from getting into tap water from home plumbing, please follow the guidance from the United States Environmental Protection Agency in the next column (to the right).

### Know Your Plumbing

- Homes built prior to the mid-1950s may still have a lead service line, unless the water service line has been replaced.
- Homes built prior to 1989 may have copper pipe with lead solder.
- Plumbing fixtures (like faucets) made prior to 2014 may contain up to 8% lead.

### Reducing Corrosion in City Waterlines

Columbus has a very effective program that protects pipes from corrosion. Certified water operators adjust the water's chemistry (pH) and add zinc orthophosphate to the treated water. The treatment process makes the water less corrosive and creates a coating inside the pipes to serve as a barrier between the pipes and water. This prevents conditions that can cause the lead to leach.

As required by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, 50 homes in Columbus are tested to ensure that the corrosion protection program continues to perform well. In addition, various sites are voluntarily tested monthly for lead, and the finished water at our three drinking water plants is tested regularly for corrosivity.

## Ways to Reduce Lead in Your Water

Water line breaks and repairs in areas with lead service lines may cause disruptions in water quality, including discolored water and/or potentially a temporary increase in lead levels in the drinking water.

As a standard practice, the USEPA recommends the following actions to reduce possible lead exposure in drinking water:

- If water has not been used for several hours, run the tap until there is a noticeable temperature drop. Then, run water for 30 seconds to 3 minutes before using it for drinking and cooking. This helps flush water that may have contained lead that may have leached from plumbing.
- Use cold water for cooking, drinking and preparing baby formula. Boiling the water will not reduce lead.
- Clean your faucet aerators regularly.

For additional information, visit [drinktap.org](http://drinktap.org) or [epa.gov/safewater/lead](http://epa.gov/safewater/lead). For any questions, please contact the City of Columbus Water Quality Assurance Lab at 614-645-7691 or [WaterQuality@columbus.gov](mailto:WaterQuality@columbus.gov).



***Regardless of what plumbing materials your home has, the most effective way to limit exposure to lead in drinking water is to flush the tap for at least 30 seconds to 3 minutes if the water has not been used for several hours (six or more hours).***



## Sources of Lead

Common sources of lead exposure include:

- Lead based paint (banned since 1978).
- Lead contaminated dust or soil.
- Some lead and copper plumbing materials, particularly prior to 1989, and brass fixtures prior to 2014.
- Certain types of pottery, pewter, jewelry and cosmetics.

## Water Quality Information

The USEPA action level for lead in water is currently 15 parts per billion. During this last testing period, more than 90% of the homes tested were below the level of detection (1 ppb). Columbus continues to be in compliance with all state and federal requirements on lead in drinking water, including the Lead and Copper Rule. For more information about water quality, please see the latest Consumer Confidence Report at [columbus.gov/ccr](https://columbus.gov/ccr) or call the Columbus Water Quality Assurance Lab at 614-645-7691.

## Home Water Treatment Systems

If you are considering a home water treatment device, research the product to ensure it does what you intend it to do. These devices have limitations and require periodic maintenance and replacement. Reverse osmosis and distillers can effectively remove lead from drinking water. If using a filter, filters shall meet NSF/ANSI standard 53 for "Drinking Water Treatment Units-Health Effects" for the removal of lead. However, all lead reduction product claims should be verified. It should be noted that water softeners have little or no effect on lead reduction.

## Resources Available

- Columbus Public Health offers services to eliminate exposure to lead at [columbus.gov/publichealth/programs/Healthy-Homes](https://columbus.gov/publichealth/programs/Healthy-Homes) or call 614-645-8191.
- The USEPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline provides information about drinking water programs authorized under the Safe Drinking Water Act at 800-426-4791 or [epa.gov/safewater/lead](https://epa.gov/safewater/lead).
- To determine if your home has a city lead service line, visit <https://www.columbus.gov/utilities/water-protection/wgal/Lead-in-Drinking-Water/> or call the Water Quality Assurance Lab, 614-645-7691.
- Request a copy of the building permit for your home to learn the name of your builder. The contractors may have a record of plumbing materials used. Columbus residents may call 614-645-7433.
- Ohio EPA has a list of certified labs that test for lead in water. Call 614-644-2752 or visit <https://epa.ohio.gov/static/Portals/28/documents/labcert/Combined-Lab-List.pdf>
- The USEPA recently revised the lead and copper rule so regulatory changes are expected for all water operators in the near future. For more information visit: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/revised-lead-and-copper-rule>
- Other resources:
  - Ohio EPA: [epa.ohio.gov/pic/lead](https://epa.ohio.gov/pic/lead)
  - Drinktap.org
  - NSF International: [nsf.org](https://www.nsf.org) or 800-NSF-8010